

**THE 2011 CUTTINGTON UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL
SHOW –RAPID APPRAISAL
FINAL REPORT**

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Executive Summary

The 2011 Cuttington Agricultural Show adopted the theme “Promoting Peace through Farming”, and designed the show to be a best practice for boosting agricultural production in Bong county, Liberia through the establishment of a collaborative partnership between the students of the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CAIDS) farmers in Bong County, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Government of Liberia, especially the Ministries of Agriculture (MOA) and Internal affairs (MIA) .

The Cuttington University College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CU-CAIDS) appealed to the Africa Leadership Training and Capacity Building Project (Africa Lead) for financial assistance. The USAID funded Africa Lead project develops the capacity of agriculture leaders in Africa to prioritize key activities and implement the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) regional and national agriculture investment plans. , The Africa Lead project provided US\$ 22,618 or 80% of the funds needed to cover the cost of the show held April 15-16 on the campus grounds. The Africa lead project team had to also evaluate the capacity of the CU-CAIDS to successfully implement the agricultural show and determine if the show met international standards, achieved its goals and objectives, and to produce a report with findings and recommendations for improving the planning and implementation of future shows

Recognizing that two days, and two part-time staff, were grossly insufficient to adequately assess the capacity of the CU to implement this show, the Africa Lead staff therefore, decided to conduct a quick rapid appraisal of the show rather than a detailed assessment.

The team adopted and modified a capacity appraisal tool to evaluate CU -CAIDS ability to implement the show. This tool provided the Africa LEAD team with an instrument and a process for evaluating the planning and implementation of the agricultural show by the committees. Two focus groups comprising of some members of the Planning and Finance, Grounds and Exhibits, Accommodation and Entertainment, and Publicity and Transportation Committees and a few key informants were engaged in conversations to provide their perspectives and scores for each subcomponent of the seven organizational categories.

Findings

Focus group interviews revealed that the burden of the work of organizing the show rested on a few individuals in each committee who had some experience in implementing agriculture shows. Most committee members had no experienced and thus were not prepared to execute the tasks specified in the scope of work of the committees.

There were noticeable delays in the arrival of exhibitors and their products, setting up of the stalls, and preparation of the ground, which caused the show to start late. These delays subsequently resulted in the reduction of time available for the judges to do a good and timely

job at evaluating producer's goods, and thus final award announcements were late as well. Nevertheless, the show proceeded without any major problems or glitches

Judging by the stated objectives of the show which included helping to develop and strengthen the CAIDS' Outreach for Extension and Training Services (POETS), fostering networking and collaborative partnerships among stakeholders and bringing together cultures in Bong County to strengthen peaceful co-existence in the County and in Liberia by promoting to achieve sustainable food security in Liberia, the show as achieved its goal successfully. It brought together most of the key stakeholders including farmers, government, research and educational institutions, service providers and development partners such as NGOs, PVOs, and USAID project implementers and the CAIDS' agricultural and rural development students together. It created an occasion to exchange ideas and opened up networking possibilities among the various stakeholders. The Show also showcased the efforts of the University in promoting the development of food security and offered the staff an opportunity to learn and to test their ability to host future shows. It also offered USAID-funded Africa LEAD Liberian Champions for Change alumni the opportunity to host a booth to share their experiences and advocate for the promotion of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) agenda in the nation.

The show also afforded CU the opportunity to incite the interest the Head of State, Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who attended the show and the European Union and other donors for them to consider funding some of the University's programs and initiatives., The students in CAIDS also had the first time opportunity to observe and engage with a large group of farmers and share in the pride of their products and all exhibits.

Results of the Organizational Capacities Appraisal

The organizational areas that require skills, competence and high performance in the planning and execution of a successful show were assessed and ranked by members of the various committees and others associated with the organization of the show using an Organizational Capacity Appraisal Tool (Annex 2). A rating scale of 1 through 4 (***1 =Nascent or Immature; 2=Emerging or Promising; 3=Expanding or Growing; 4=Mature***) was used in this assessment and the scoring was assigned to sub-components.

Focus group responses and scores provided an insight into the levels that the organizers themselves perceived their roles and their performance in terms of Governance (2.5 - Emerging), Management Practices (3.5 - Expanding), Human Resources (1.5 - Nascent), Financial Resources (3.5 - Expanding, Service Delivery (2.2 – Emerging), External Relations (2.9 – Expanding) and Partnering (2.0 – Emerging). The data provided the team with the opportunity to identify the constraints and gaps and thereby, recommend interventions that would help the organizers to reduce the vulnerabilities that confront them and subsequently increase their capacities for peak performance to achieve the objectives of future fairs.

Recommendations

Skills levels and experience of future committee members: The positive results of the show demonstrate the feasibility of making it an annual affair. Such a commitment however, requires that every effort must be made to improve the planning and execution functions which also require concerted and coordinated plans to sharpen the skills of the organizers. The over-riding recommendation is the need to train and build the capacity of all those who would be involved in the organization of future shows in the key areas represented by the scope of work of the various committees. Such capacity development should include the participation of key Show planners in reputable national and international Shows and engagement in short courses and professional attachments in other African countries or abroad.

Evaluation of Exhibits and Cultural Performances: Training of potential judges is required for sharpening the skills and knowledge of the judges. Furthermore, it is imperative that the organizers get some first-hand experience elsewhere on how to structure effective mechanisms for the selection and organization of judges and development of simple but effective criteria and tools for ranking exhibits and performances.

Planning and Finance Management :Both planning and finance management require a great deal of attention, expertise, experience and coordination. The attention and contribution of each member of the team is crucial for the organization of a successful fair. According to respondents, most members of the team did not possess the requisite experience and skills to make a strong team. If the Show account is to be separated from the Cuttington University system and managed independently by the show organizers, then there is a requirement of training for those who would be made responsible for this task .Furthermore, systems have to be put in place for the University to exercise some level of oversight on the management of the funds.

Enhancement of Fund-Raising: Owing to the importance of fund raising to the entire enterprise of hosting a Show, there is the need for the establishment of a fund-raising subcommittee under the planning and finance committee and chaired by an experienced fundraiser who would develop strategies with his/her team in identifying, reaching and succeeding in securing financial and other material support from donors. A short course in fundraising for non-profit organizations would be required for key members of the team in order to ensure high performance of this subcommittee.

Diversification of Activities of the Show: Agricultural fairs or shows usually have other components that provide entertainment and fun for both adults and children and offer opportunities for the organizers to earn extra income during the show. There are various

strategies that have been tested and tried and which could be learned from the experiences of implementers of other successful shows elsewhere on the African continent or abroad. Some members of the planning and finance committee would benefit from relevant and appropriate short courses that are available from the Africa LEAD database of Short Courses and Training Institutions. Short internships or attachment of key personnel to participate and understudy organizers of selected fairs abroad in order to acquire the skills for planning and managing fairs successfully is also another practical approach.

Expansion of the Show's Stakeholder and Participant Base: The participation in the Show by a large number of diverse interest groups and stakeholders in the various agricultural value chains is an important feature of a successful fair. Expanding the scope and diversity of activities in future agricultural Show would be an added advantage that would result in increased attendance and participation by rural, peri-urban and urban households and families because of the enjoyment it would bring to them. There is a need to involve the various service providers and participants in the various agricultural and crafts value chains that were not invited to the show.

It would also be valuable to invite all those agribusiness and service providers that support the work and activities of farmers, including, equipment suppliers, credit providers, warehousing and storage companies, processors, transporters, and all the other ancillary service providers involved in the agricultural industry so that the show will take on the character of a comprehensive and all-inclusive one that brings all the key stakeholders and publics together to engender interactions and the sealing of various profitable deals.

Direct involvement of Cuttington University: The University needs to take ownership and be directly involved in the organization of the show in which case it will call it a University program and would consequently, be programmed as such and would also fund a portion of the budget. Currently, the program is seen as an idea and activity being undertaken mainly by the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development (CAIDS) of the University.

A. Background

The 2011 Cuttington University Agricultural Show, the first in the history of this institution adopted the theme “Promoting Peace through Farming”. By bringing together diverse agriculture stakeholders in Bong county to show case their produce, products and equipment, the show organizers aimed not only to stimulate agri-business linkages, foster collaboration and partnership building between the students of the University’s College of Agriculture and Integrated Studies (CAIDS), farmers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Ministries of Agriculture (MOA) and Internal affairs (MIA) but also to boost agricultural production in the county.

An ancillary objective of the show, to develop and expand CAIDS’ Program of Outreach for Extension and Training Services (POETS) required that CAID students learn experientially by working with farmer’s in the county in preparation for the show. By bringing student’s of diverse cultures together with farmers in Bong, POETS fostered peaceful inter ethnic working relationships while simultaneously striving to increase food security in a sustainable manner in the county.

In order to achieve these goals and objective, the CAID leadership sought technical assistance and financial support from the USAID funded Africa Leadership Training and Capacity Building Program (Africa Lead). Africa Lead, as a key capacity building arm of the US Government’s Feed the Future initiative, operates in three regions—with offices in Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa -and in at least 13 sub-Saharan countries including Liberia. Working across public, civil society, university and private sector institutions, it builds the capacity of leaders to prioritize key activities and implement the Regional and National Agriculture Investment Plans within the CAADP framework. The program strengthens country, regional and continent-wide communities of practitioners and leadership networks. Africa Lead seeks to ensure that sufficient leaders are trained to maintain a critical mass of food security “champions” who will drive agriculture-led development.

At the time of the planning and organization of the show, Africa Lead had trained over 50 Liberian leaders comprised of government, civil society, private sector and agriculture-related research organizations in its Champions for Change Module One. This Module inspired, and energized a group of 18 Liberian champions to volunteer their services during the two days of the show. The Champions for Change graduates were assigned various roles by the Africa Lead team and did the following:

- Distributed flyers on the CAADP to show participants and visitors
- Supported the show organizers in the management of the show
- Helped with registration of farmers
- Supported the university’s hospitality and protocol team

- Assisted Dr. John Azu, Africa Lead Training and Institutional Liaison Manager, to conduct a rapid appraisal of the show

Africa Lead provided through a Fixed Price Purchase Order (FFP) (PO) agreement the sum of US\$ 22,618 or 80% of the funds needed to cover the cost of the show. This was justified on the basis that the goal and objectives of the show were consistent with the objectives of Africa LEAD and that the implementation of this show would serve as a training ground for CU staff as well as a venue for Liberian Champions for Change agents to advocate for food security and CAADP principles.

Per the FPPO agreement, CU was required to:

- Prepare the show ground
- Organize construction and placement of booths at the show
- Provide one booth for the Liberia Champion graduates
- Register the participants
- Provide complete management of the show.
- Provide the final report on the show to AFRICA LEAD
- Provide at least 20% the show budget

Africa Lead was required to:

- Assess the capacity of the show with recommendations
- Provide 80% of the show budget

B. Purpose of the Assessment & Key Tasks

The Africa LEAD team was given the task to evaluate the capacity of the Cuttington University-CAIDS to implement the agricultural show and to determine if the show organizers achieved intended goal and objectives. This rapid appraisal examines the structure, function and roles of the CU agriculture show committee and sub-committees responsible for organizing and implementing the show. The appraisal team identified and evaluated the performance of the committees most critical in the planning and implementation process. The key tasks and activities completed by the Africa Lead team include the following:

- Participated and observed the planning and organization of the show the day before and the day of the show, April 15 and April 16, 2011.
- Conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions with CU staff and show participants
- Identified constraints in the management and implementation of the show that need to be removed to improve performance for future shows.
- Identified the capacity gaps and skills that need to be strengthened in the organizers to enhance the management and implementation of the show

- Made recommendations for improving the planning and management for future show implementation

C. Methodology

The Africa Lead team adopted and modified an organizational capacity appraisal tool to evaluate the capacity of CU-CAIDS to implement the show. The Africa Lead team followed the methodology and steps outlined in the survey form, but adapted it by selecting the most appropriate indicators and scoring nomenclature for the University and then developed the data collection strategy and plan. The seven functional areas and the associated subcomponents/subcomponents of each functional area that were assessed include Governance (board, mission/goals, executive leadership, legal status within University); Management Practices (organizational structure, information system, administrative procedures, planning, program development, program reporting) ;Human Resources (personnel management, diversity issues, supervisory practices, salary allowances and benefits) ;Financial Resources (accounting, budgeting, financial/inventory controls, financial reporting); Service Delivery (sectoral expertise, constituency ownership, M&E system); External Relations (constituency relations, Government relations, donor relations, public relations) ;Partnering (intra-sectoral partnering, inter-sectoral partnering), and sub-components include the board, and organizational structure. For each sub-component, the criteria of organizational capacity or performance developed in the tool were refined by selected Africa LEAD Champions for Change and select members of the agriculture show planning committee prior to administration.

Rating Scale: The tool uses a rating scale of 1 through 4, described as follows 1: =*Nascent or Immature*; 2=*Emerging or Promising*; 3=*Expanding or Growing*; 4=*Mature*) to assess the level of organizational development. Ratings, from 1 to 4 were provided through by consensus for the focus group for each of the subcategories area. All the subcategory scores under each major category were summed up and then divided by the number of subcategories to give the scores or ratings for each of the major categories or functional areas. . The full tabulation of results can be found in Appendix 2 of the report.

The team used a participatory approach, which required CU to define its organizational needs and aspirations and rate their own abilities in critical management and programmatic areas. The Africa Lead team facilitated this process through two focus group discussions, and several key informant interviews using the revised appraisal tool as a guide for the discussions and interviews. This allowed interviewees to provide their own perspective and score for each subcomponent of the seven organizational categories.

Focus Group One: The first group composed of Rev. Momoh S Foh, JP, Dean, College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CAIDS), Dr. Philip Ndaloma, Chair, Department of Agriculture, Prof Selorm Akaba, Lecturer, Department of Agriculture

Focus Group Two: The members of the group included Monica Khesen Honore, County Agriculture Coordinator, Joseph Ndebe, Teaching Assistant, CAIDS/CU and Mercy Lah

In this report, the Team seeks to do the following:

- i. Comment on the personal observations and discussions with some key informants during the conduct of the show
- ii. Identify constraints that need to be removed to increase the performance of the organizers in holding future fairs
- iii. Provide recommendations for improving the performance of the planning organization

D. Limitations of the Study

There were serious unanticipated problems with the availability of time and personnel that frustrated the effort of the team to do a comprehensive assessment which would normally take between 10 to 15 days of work. The Africa LEAD team arrived at the show site in Gbarnga where the University is located only the night before the launching of the show. The time available, therefore, for interviewing respondents was limited by the unavailability of the main respondents to be involved in the assessments. The respondents happened to be the very people who were working frantically to ensure that the last minute preparations required to successfully launch the show were being made and so it was very difficult to get them together as a group. Finally, the main person leading the Africa LEAD assessment effort, John Azu, was selected in the second day of the show and sworn in as a judge for the show, a task which virtually took a long time to accomplish thereby leaving very little time for the conduct of additional interviews while at the same time the respondents were also not available due to the various roles they were playing during the show. The results presented, therefore, are based on a limited sample of respondents but we also believe that the findings and recommendations are valid.

E. Findings

The 2011 Cuttington Agricultural Show was organized through a broad-based committee system which had the Provost and Financial Controller performing oversight and advisory roles. Four committees were set up earlier to coordinate and manage the planning and execution of the agricultural fair and included the following:

- Planning And Finance Committee - Chairperson, Rev. Momoh S. Foh, .JP
- Grounds And Exhibits Committee – Chairperson, Mr. Philip Ndaloma
- Accommodation And Entertainment Committee – Chairperson, Mrs. Gloria Bishop
- Publicity And Transportation Committee – Chairperson, Mr. Stephen V. Matthews

There were 11 persons in each of the committees and each was given a clear scope of work that specified their roles and responsibilities.

This report examines the functions and roles of the organization responsible for conducting the show with reference to the performance of the various committees most critical in the planning and execution of a successful fair according to the goal of the organizers.

During the focus group discussions, several committee members admitted that most of the work of the committees was done by only a few individuals who had the skills and experience necessary to organize an agriculture show. Most members had never organized an agriculture show and didn't have any knowledge on how the show should be implemented. Therefore, they couldn't contribute effectively per the scope of work assigned to the committees. Some focus group respondents, did however, indicate that although the work load was heavy, they did learn quite a lot from their experienced colleagues and that helped improve the performance of their committee.

The Planning and Finance Committee: This committee was responsible for coordination of the organizational arrangements to run the show successfully. The committee faced an initial difficulty in getting financial support for the show from outside donors and that resulted in the very late arrival of funds (two weeks to the date of the show). This as expected, negatively affected the effective planning and undertaking of required purchases of materials and services. Secondly, funds obtained from donors were paid into the University's account from where they were expected to be subsequently disbursed to the various committees as and when required and requested. The complex Cuttington University's financial request and disbursement process further delayed resources getting to the committees which prevented them from purchasing needed supplies and services and in the execution of some critical preparatory tasks in a timely manner that could have improved the overall implementation of the show.

The Grounds and Exhibit Committee: This committee, had the role and responsibility for the organization, preparation and allocation of stalls and the VIP stand on the show grounds, and VIP stand, and for the registration of exhibits and exhibitors.. This committee formed an on-site Registration Committee, made up of the Africa LEAD Champions for Change graduates who helped coordinate the registration and allocation of stalls to exhibitors.

These tasks were well done. There was orderliness and compliance to the rules set by the committee pertaining to registration procedures and the respect for the boundaries established to separate the popular stands, the exhibits perimeter and the VIP. Because the Head of State was expected to attend, security measures had to be put in place to control the movement of the crowd and protect the area. The team also observed that there were no signs of coercion or force used to maintain order even with the presence of the Head of State and her entourage and that was a credit to the very good work and performance of grounds and exhibit committee.

The Accommodation and Entertainment Committee: This committee was given the responsibility for organizing accommodation for the participating farmers and catering for them and the over 250 invited guest that attended the show. The activities planned and the services

provided to the farmers and other guests including the Head of State, her entourage and members of government) as a result of the work of this committee, were very good considering the large number of people that had to be taken care of before and after the show.

Publicity and Transportation Committee: Membership of this committee consisted of representatives of the Cuttington University Students' Union and news reporters of the Cuttington Radio Station. Impressive and extensive publicity were secured for the show from the campus radio. The transportation committee was also responsible for arranging the transportation needs of participants and some of the invited guests to and from town to the show ground

Panel of Judges of Exhibits and Performances: This panel, made up of 8 (eight) individuals, was appointed and sworn in on the day the show began to evaluate the exhibits, artifacts, paintings and cultural performances. The selected categories of exhibits were very broad and representative of the products produced in the Bong County and made participation all-inclusive thus attracting a large number of exhibitors. Of the more than 1,200 items exhibited, 284 prizes were won and distributed. There was no demonstrable dissention and rancor after the results were announced and the people went back to their districts happy. There were, however, serious problems associated with the size of the panel, the cumbersomeness of the criteria for judging and the inexperience of members of the panel to perform their judging function efficiently..

The organizers did an excellent job assuring a good representation of farmers from Bong County. Eleven (11) out of the twelve districts of the County were represented at the fair and there were 3 farmers that were selected per each district. There were also thirty seven (37) different items included under each of the seven (7) categories of products that were specified, namely, cereal grains, tuberous crops, vegetables, beverages, oil crops, fruit crops and livestock. There were also 5 categories of cultural products and performances namely, traditional cultural performances, works of raphia, cane/reeves/straw/rattan, metal works, wood carvings and art works each of which had eighteen (18) different items. There were, therefore, more than one thousand two hundred (1,200) items registered that had to be ranked by the judges and that was a formidable task considering the small team of eight (8) judges that were sworn in on the morning of the second day of the exhibition. Finally, the panel of judges had to quickly agree on streamlined criteria for judging and this delayed the judging process and the selection of winners. Her Excellency, President Sirleaf should have distributed prizes to the winners but unfortunately, all the results were not ready on time for her to perform this role. She was, however, able to announce and crown the male and female Master Farmers that were selected unanimously by the panel of judges.

Delay in Arrival of Farmers & Exhibitors and Start of Show:

The show organizers advertized the show to start on Friday, April 15 but although most of the booths and stalls were prepared and ready on that day, the show did not begin until morning of Saturday, April 16th. Although the Africa Lead team and a couple NGO's set up their booths on

Friday morning, most farmers and exhibitors arrived late on Friday afternoon. Their lateness subsequently affected the preparation and display of exhibits which in turn delayed the start of the work of the judges which prevented them from completing their work on time.

In spite of the delays, by the time of the arrival of the VIPs and invited guest everything was in place and the show proceeded without major problems,

Stakeholder Collaboration & Positive Results

Judging by these stated objectives of the show, the show was viewed to be quite successful. In terms of promoting stakeholder collaboration, the show achieved its objective except for the gross under representation and participation of firms from the private sector. The show brought together some of the key agriculture stakeholders in the county including farmers, government, research and educational institutions, and service providers like NGOs, PVOs and donors. The show provided USAID and its partners working in Liberia, and the CAIDS' agricultural and rural development students the opportunity to network and exchange ideas and get to know each other's project's better. The show also provided the venue for CU CAIDS to showcase its food security programs and provided a learning opportunity for students and staff on the organization and management of an agriculture show which can be applied in the organization of shows in the future,

It also offered some of the Liberian Champions for Change, who are alumni of the USAID-funded Africa LEAD program, the opportunity to host a booth to showcase the importance of pursuing the food security agenda of the nation and to share their experiences and vision for promoting the agenda of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). Another positive outcome of the show for the University is that it aroused the interest of various NGOs, the European Union (EU) and the Head of State, Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to consider funding some of the University's agriculture programs and initiatives. The students in CAIDS also had the first time opportunity to observe and engage with rural farmers and it is anticipated that this experience would have positive mind-changing effects on many of the participating students studying agriculture and rural development in the University.

Limited Scope of the Show

The objectives of the CU-CAIDS agricultural show were quite limited compared to other shows in the region and on the continent. Agricultural shows generally go beyond these boundaries established for the CU-CAIDS show. Future shows need to build on this experience and to incorporate several other important features that would make it more embracing and appealing. In that sense, there is a need for the organizers to expand the range of activities to be included in the show to be at par with those of standard agricultural shows that have more extensive objectives and hence appeal.

F. Results of the Organizational Capacities Rapid Appraisal

The operational areas that require skills, competence and high performance in the planning and execution of a successful show were evaluated and ranked by members of the various committees and others associated with the organization of the show using the Organizational Capacity Appraisal Tool (Annex 2). The focus group members and other interviewees were asked to rate their capacities of each of the seven selected categories using the following rating scale of 1 through 4 where *1 =Nascent or Immature; 2=Emerging or Promising; 3=Expanding or Growing; 4=Mature*)

Their responses and scores were tallied to provide an insight into the levels that the organizers themselves perceived their roles and their performance in terms of Governance, Management Practices, Human Resources, Financial Resources, Service Delivery, External Relations and Partnering. The findings are presented in the table below:

Capacity Area	Average Score
Governance	2.5-Emerging or promising
Management Practices	3.5-Expanding or growing
Human Resources	1.5-Nascent or immature
Financial Resources	3.5 Expanding or growing
Service Delivery	2.2 Emerging or promising
External Relations	2.9 Expanding or growing
Partnering	2.0 Emerging or promising

These data provided the team with the opportunity to identify the constraints and gaps and thereby, recommend interventions that would help the organizers to reduce the vulnerabilities that confronted them and subsequently increase their capacities for peak performance to achieve the objectives of more complex future fairs. The following is the team's evaluation of CU-CAIDS organizers in terms of the seven capacity areas assessed during the focus group and key informant interviews:

1. Governance

The Cuttington College of Agricultural and Integrated Development Studies, specifically Rev. Foh submitted a request to organize the show to the Office of the President of the University. The President of the University, Dr. Henrique Tokpah formally approved the request demonstrating that CAID had the support of the highest management level of the University administration and followed CU procedures. The goal and objectives of the show were well articulated by CAIDS, and it was obvious that the executive leadership demonstrated by Rev. Foh was exemplary. He admitted that he had been involved in the organization of many successful agriculture shows in Sierra Leone and, therefore, had a good understanding of the

principles and practices of implementing an Agricultural show. The root of the weaknesses was the inexperience of the committee members who were not familiar with the requirements for planning and implementing agricultural shows. Per the assessment findings, Governance ranked as slightly better than *emerging* (2.5) which show that more effort needs to be expended to improve performance of the committees in this sphere.

2. Management Practices

Management Practices, exemplified by organizational structure, information systems and flow, administrative procedures, planning, program development and reporting, was ranked 3.5 indicating *expanding to mature* status of the organization. In fact the structure adopted through the establishment of various committees allowed work to go on in spite of the weak internal structures of most of the committees. The relative success achieved by the show was the result of the good performance of the committees.

3. Human Resources

The committee members were selected from diverse backgrounds based on their affiliation to specific organizations on campus as well as on their perceived skills and experience. Personnel on the committees and their management were ranked 1.5, slightly above this asset being *nascent or embryonic*. The fact that most of the work of the committees ended up in the hands of a few members confirms the weakness of the human resource base and hence the low score. In order to improve the performance of future agriculture shows, the CAIDS staff will need to get training or participate in internships where they would sharpen their skills and gain experience on how to organize and implement a more multifaceted agricultural show. The award of honorariums may also help to motivate and compensate committee members to invest more time and effort into the agriculture show organization

. Financial Resources

Despite initial difficulties in raising funds and delays in disbursement, the group ranked financial resources as 3.5 (*expanding or growing*). In general, they were optimistic that raising funds for future shows would be easier and not a problem and that in the future, they could better plan and manage financial resources if they had adequate time. The Planning and Finance committee integrated the budget with program planning and in the end prepared a comprehensive financial report (albeit unaudited) for the show. The committee used the University's financial management system to disburse the funds mobilized for the show.

Although dependence on the University's financial control system eliminated the burden of management and administration of the funds for the committee, requests for disbursements from the financial controller were fraught with delays that negatively impacted on the work and performance of several of the committees that needed funds quickly. If the organizers decide to

manage and administer the funds themselves in future because of this experience, then there would be a need to set up a workable system that would be managed in a transparent manner by the organizers and this would require the setting up of an accounting system for financial/inventory control and reporting, training and capacity building to ensure probity and accountability.

This committee would also benefit from training in resource mobilization skills as well as skills for soliciting the private sector for sponsorship of all or parts of the show.

5. Service Delivery

Service delivery defined as related to sectoral experience, constituency ownership and monitoring and evaluation capability. Except for Rev Foh, who had experience implementing shows in Sierra Leone, the faculty of CAIDS did not have the skills and experience necessary to organize and implement the show in a timely and stress free manner. The focus groups recognized this and scored Service delivery at 2.2 (emerging or promising), indicating a significant weakness. The planning was initiated and executed from the University and key agriculture stakeholders in the county did not seem to influence service delivery. Key informants from the NGO sector as well as staff from MOA and MIA said that they were not invited to any show planning meetings nor were they given an opportunity to give their advice and opinion how the show should be organized and implemented. Maybe if they had involved stakeholders they would not have left out in this process the “Private Sector” which is a big and important driver of agriculture in Liberia.

Moreover, a monitoring and evaluation plan and system to measuring performance to ensure effective service delivery was not in place. This would have allowed a non-prejudicial monitoring and evaluation of performance against benchmarks and indicators that would feed into the planning and implementation functions for the committees. Training in the development of a monitoring and evaluation system during the initial design stages of planning a show would lead to significant improvements in the planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting and further improvements in managing future shows.

6. External Relations

The components of external relations are: constituency relations, government relations, donor relations, public relations and media relations. This factor was scored 2.9, (*emerging to expanding*) and work needs to be done to increase the capacity of the organizers to develop strong external relations with various constituents which could help foster the securing of more funding and sponsorship of the event. The Chairman of the Planning and Finance committee, Rev. Foh, the visionary behind the show, had established very good relations with USAID and the Sierra Leone Embassy in Liberia, which enabled the planning committee to obtain start-up funds from the Sierra Leone Embassy to launch the preliminary publicity and promotional

campaigns, and the balance of funds from the USAID's/ Africa Lead project. Rev. Foh and some of his colleagues also had good p relationships with the Bong County Agricultural Coordinators who became key allies in the planning and execution of the show.

The team learned that although the Ministry of Agriculture was contacted with proposals for holding this show there was no overt positive response. The show was planned for only the Bong County by the organizers and so it did not have a national appeal and maybe that was the reason that the directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture did not show much interest in its planning at the national level.

The Africa LEAD team observed that as a first time effort, the organizers were just beginning to develop their external relations and make attempts to get the attention of donors, stakeholders and government. They now have an opportunity to develop the practices and procedures for recognizing donors and stakeholders.

Although media relations were limited to Bong County the Campus radio and newspaper thoroughly covered the show. . The skills in engendering external relations could be improved in future through capacity building initiatives. The role of media at agriculture shows could also be learned through internships and participation in successful agriculture shows in the region and on the continent.

7. Partnering

Partnering, exemplified by intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral partnering was scored a low 2 (*emerging or promising*). Besides the successful partnership initiated with the Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone and USAID/Liberia, there were no other private or public sector partners. The Sierra Leone Embassy helped distribute the CU agriculture show proposal to various institutions including the USAID, WFP, FAO, CRS, CARE, the EU, SOLIDARITE, and the Ministry of Agriculture in Liberia. As explained by some of the respondents, most of these relationships were cemented when there was little time left for the show to be held on and so it was mainly a problem of poor planning and time management. The finding is indicative of the need for these relationships to be established early and be nurtured in the planning of future shows.

Partnering with the private sector which was lacking in this show also could have increased the resources available and funding for the show. Private agri-business firms such as agro-input and equipment dealers, processors, and financial institutions that provide agriculture credit would have been pleased to showcase and market their products at the show while sponsoring components of the show and paying for the booth that would be allocated to them to display their wares.

G. Recommendations

The team's recommendations to both Cuttington University and USAID/Liberia, in term of areas that they can support Cuttington University for future agriculture show management include the following:

Agriculture Show Planning, Implementation and Management:

The few positive impacts of the show demonstrate the feasibility of making it an annual affair. Such a commitment, however, requires that every effort must be made to improve the planning and execution functions which also require concerted and coordinated plans to sharpen the skills of the organizers. It is also essential to create mechanisms and conditions that would ensure better functioning and performance of all key players necessary to achieve the goal and objectives of the show as envisaged by the organizers. The over-riding recommendation from a post-show assessment made by the Faculty of the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies, is the need to train and build the capacity of all those who would be involved in the organization of future shows in the key areas represented by the scope of work of the various committees. Such capacity building should include the participation of key show planners in reputable national and international shows and engagement in relevant planning short courses and professional attachments in other African countries.

Judging and Evaluation of Exhibits and Cultural Performances:

There were serious problems associated with the size of the panel of judges, the criteria for judging the various exhibits and the level of experience of the judges to enable them to perform their judging function efficiently. Training of potential judges is required for sharpening the skills and knowledge of the judges. Furthermore, it is imperative that the organizers get some experience in effective mechanisms for the selection and organization of judges and development of simple but effective criteria and tools for ranking exhibits and performances. The following recommendations are suggested:

- Train selected members for uniformity in application of the rules of judging entries appropriately
- Increase the size of the judging team -the team was too small considering the number of exhibits and performances to be scored and ranked and must be considered in future
- Develop a simplified tool and criteria for uniform judging. The current system and modalities turned out to be too complex, time consuming and cumbersome and these resulted in a large diversity in the scoring and created difficulties during the tallying of scores.
- Develop and provide in advance a detailed scope of work for judges to allow judges to study in order to enhance compliance and fulfillment of the expected result of fair and uniform assessments. (e.g. It was later during the program that the judges were asked to

come up with the names of the Master male and female farmers and the criteria for the selection was not clear to the judges and that created problems).

Planning and Financial Management

Both planning and financial management require a great deal of attention, expertise, experience and coordination. If the show account is to be separated from the Cuttington University system and managed independently by the show organizers, then there is a need to train those who would be made responsible for this task in financial and project management. Furthermore, systems have to be put in place for the University to exercise some level of oversight on the management of the funds.

Fund-Raising/Resource Mobilization

The lack of a resource mobilization/fundraising plan and strategy for sourcing funds to support the agricultural show proved to be a major weakness in the planning and organization of the fund. With a plan and adequate time, CU could have mobilized funds from diverse sources, i.e. government, civil society, private sector, research organizations. In addition, the CU could have developed some user fees, for example, a pricing plan for show stands & booth charging different categories of participants, different rates. The organizers could also have charged a gate fee for visiting the show, sold raffle tickets and raffled prizes donated by private companies etc. Fund-raising as well as proposal writing is a learned skill that can be acquired through training of key members of the team

Owing to the importance of fund raising to the entire enterprise of hosting a Show, there is the need for the establishment of a fund-raising subcommittee under the planning and finance committee and chaired by an experienced fundraiser who would develop strategies with his/her team in identifying, reaching and succeeding in securing financial and other material support from donors. A short course in fundraising for non-profit organizations would be required for key members of the team in order to ensure high performance of this subcommittee.

Diversifying Activities of the Show

Agricultural fairs or shows usually have other components that provide entertainment and fun for both adults and children and offer opportunities for the organizers to earn extra income during the show through the provision of various games, provision of stalls for selling various foods, snacks and drinks. Interesting children's activities, raffles and competitions that attract a wide section of the population are also ways of raising funds during the show and increasing the appeal to both rural and urban populations. There are various strategies that have been tested and tried and which could be learned from the experiences of implementers of other successful shows elsewhere on the African continent or abroad by members of the CUCAIDS organizing team. Some members of the planning and finance committee would also benefit from relevant and

appropriate short courses that are available from the Africa LEAD database of Short Courses and Training Institutions. Short internships or attachment of key personnel to participate and understudy organizers of selected fairs abroad in order to acquire the skills for planning and managing fairs successfully is also another practical approach.

Expanding the Show Stakeholder and Participant Base

The participation in the Show by a large number of diverse interest groups and stakeholders in the various agricultural value chains in the country is an important feature of a successful fair. Expanding the scope and diversity of activities in future agricultural show would be an added advantage that would result in increased attendance and participation by rural, peri-urban and urban households and families because of the enjoyment it would bring to them. There are various service providers and participants in the various agricultural and crafts value chains that were not invited to the show due to the limited prescribed purpose of the show. It would be valuable to have all those agribusiness and service providers that support the work and activities of farmers, including, equipment suppliers, credit providers, warehousing and storage companies, processors, transporters, and all the other ancillary service providers involved in the agricultural industry so that the show will take on the character of a comprehensive and all-inclusive one that brings all the key stakeholders and publics together to engender interactions and the sealing of various profitable deals.

Owing to the novelty of the fair at Cuttington, it is understandable that the goal and scope were limited, but future fairs could be modeled on standard agricultural fairs that are being implemented successfully elsewhere. As the scope of the show is widened in the future to incorporate various activities and stakeholders who are represented in the various agricultural value chains, the dependence on a few people to carry on with the work and fulfill the functions of the committees will not hinder the planning and successful execution of the show. The need for exposing the key people involved in carrying out the activities of the various committees to training and capacity building opportunities are key requirements for shortening the learning curve.

Engaging Senior Management of Cuttington University in Planning and Organization of the Show

Senior management of the University needs to take ownership and be directly involved in the organization of the show –this happened too late and mainly due to the fact that President Sirleaf and the US Ambassador confirmed attendance. If the agriculture show is included in the University's annual work plan then a budget can be allocated to it. Initially, the show was seen as a new program of the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CAIDS) of the University. Direct involvement of the senior management of university would also provide a great deal of leverage when seeking financial and material support from donors and the general public to host the Show.

Annex 1 LIST OF COMMITTEES, 2011 CUTTINGTON AGRICULTURE SHOW

A. PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Rev. Momoh S. Foh, .JP | - Chairperson |
| 2. Dr. Charles Mulbah | - Co-Chairperson |
| 3. Mr. David Kolleh | - Member |
| 4. Mrs. Gloria Bishop | - Member |
| 5. Mr. George F. Gbakolay | - Member |
| 6. Mrs. Lucia Herbert | - Member |
| 7. Mr. Henry Klemee (CAC) | - Member |
| 8. Mr. Kelfa Jembell | - Member |
| 9. Mrs. Monica Honore (CAC) | - Member |
| 10. Joseph N. Gono | - Member |
| 11. Mr. Philip Ndaloma | - Member |

B. GROUNDS AND EXHIBITS COMMITTEE

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mr. Philip Ndaloma | - Chairperson |
| 2. Mr. Jackson Dumoe | - Co-Chairperson |
| 3. Mr. Patrick Asumana | - Member |
| 4. Mr. Selorm Akaba | - Member |
| 5. Rev. Fr. James Tamba | - Member |
| 6. Mrs. Monica Honore (CAC) | - Member |
| 7. Dr. Franklyn Y. Adekiya | - Member |
| 8. Mr. Gibril Kargbo | - Member |
| 9. Mr. Bengaly M. Kamara | - Member |
| 10. Mr. Henry Klemee (CAC) | - Member |
| 11. Mr. Dickson Rogers | - Member |

C. ACCOMMODATION AND ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mrs. Gloria Bishop | - Chairperson |
| 2. Mrs. Romelle A. Horton | - Co-Chairperson |
| 3. Mr. Molly Massaquoi | - Member |
| 4. Mr. G. Y. G. Genegbanyan | - Member |
| 5. Mr. Henry Flomo | - Member |
| 6. Mr. Theodore V, K. Brown | - Member |
| 7. Mr. John Y. Gormoyor | - Member |
| 8. Ms. Comfort Ngobeh | - Member |
| 9. Mr. Christopher Sankolo | - Member |
| 10. Mr. Leesay Mulbah | - Member |
| 11. Mr. Osman Moigua | - Member. |

D. PUBLICITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mr. Stephen V. Matthews | - Chairperson |
| 2. Mr. Mallam Kaitibie | - Co-Chairperson |
| 3. Mr. Jeremiah Flomo | - Member |
| 4. Mr. Charles Mattia | - Member |
| 5. Michael Nallo | - Member |
| 6. Mr. Joseph Ndebeh | - Member |
| 7. Mr. David Kolleh | - Member |
| 8. Rev. Momoh S. Foh, JP | - Member |
| 9. Mr. Roberto Kwemenee | - Member |
| 10. Mr. Fodei Mammy | - Member |
| 11. Mr. Morlu Korsor | - Member |
| 12. Mr. Kusee Armstrong | -- Member. |

NOTE:

- Dr. Frederick S. Gbegbe. Provost of Cuttington University was Ex-Officio Member of every Committee and could attend any of the Committee meetings whenever it is convenient to him.

Panel of Judges

A panel of judges made up of 8 (eight) individuals were appointed and sworn in on the day the show began to evaluate the exhibits and cultural performances. The panel included the following:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Mr. Dickson Rogers | Lecturer, College of Education | Chairman |
| 2. Rev. Marlene Smith | Lecturer, College of Theology | Member |
| 3. Dr. John Azu | Africa LEAD West Africa | Member |
| 4. Mr. Julius K. Taitun | CARE for the NGO Family | Member |
| 5. Mr. Selorm Akaba | Lecturer, CAIDS | Member |
| 6. Ms. Mercy Lah | Student Rep. CAIDS | Member |
| 7. Ms. Patience Garlawolo | Student Rep. Education | Member |
| 8. Mr. Abel Gonotee | Student Rep. CAIDS | Member |

Annex 2

THE ASSESSMENT TOOL AND SCORES

	ASSESSMENT 1	ASSESSMENT 2	AVERAGE	CATEGORY SCORE
A. GOVERNANCE				2.6
1. Board			2.5	
a. There is a governing board	2	3		
b. Board Provides appropriate level of institutional oversight	2	3		
2. Mission, Goals and Philosophy			3	
a. Organization's mission is well defined	3	3		
3. Executive Leadership			4	
a. Executive leadership has a clear vision of organization's mission	4	4		
4. Legal Status within the university administration			1	
a. Documentation related to legal status is in order	1	1		
B. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES				2.3
1. Organizational Structure			3	

a. Lines of authority facilitate agile decision-making	3	3		
2. Information Systems			2.5	
a. Timely information is available to support decision-making	2	3		
3. Administrative Procedures			3.5	
a. Administrative tasks are systematized	3	4		
4. Planning			2	
a. Organization develops operational plans that guide action	2	2		
5. Program Development			2	
a. Baseline data collected by organization guides program	1	3		
6. Program Reporting			1	
a. Program reports accurately reflects strengths and weaknesses	1	1		
C. HUMAN RESOURCES				
1. Personnel Management			1.5	
a. Program is in place to facilitate staff development	1	2		
2. Diversity Issues			3	
a. Organization's workforce is diverse in composition	3	3		
3. Supervisory Practices	1	2	2.5	
a. Supervisory practices facilitate staff growth and				

development				
4. Salary and Benefits			1	
a. Salary and benefits are sufficient to retain skilled staff	1	1		
D. FINANCIAL RESOURCES				3.5
1. Accounting			3.5	
a. Accounting practices yield accurate financial data	4	3		
2. Budgeting			3.5	
a. Budget process is integrated with program planning	3	4		
3. Financial/Inventory Controls				
a. Independent audits are an integral part of the financial control system	4	3	3.5	
4. Financial Reporting			3.5	
a. Financial reporting is timely	4	3		
E. SERVICE DELIVERY				2.2
1. Sectoral Expertise			2.5	
a. Organization has the experience necessary to accomplish its mission	2	3		
2. Constituency Ownership			2	
a. Stakeholders influence service delivery	1	3		

3. M&E System			2	
a. Project implementation is monitored against benchmarks	1	3		
F. EXTERNAL RELATIONS				2.9
1. Constituency Relations			2	
a. Organization regards its constituency as a full partner	2	2		
2. Government Relations			2.5	
a. Organization has mechanisms in place to influence relevant government policies	3	2		
3. Donor Relations			3	
a. Organization has practices and procedures for recognizing donors	3	3		
4. Public Relations			3	
a. Organization uses multiple channels for attracting support	3	3		
5. Media Relations			4	
a. Organization maintains diverse contacts with media outlets	4	4		
G. PARTNERING				2

1. Inter-sectoral Partnering			2	
a. Organization is engaged in intra-sectoral partnerships to further mission	2	2		
2. Inter-Sectoral Partnering			2	
a. Organization is engaged in inter-sectoral partnerships to further mission	2	2		